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A Critical Analysis of the Epic Hero in Paradise Lost

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A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE EPIC
HERO IN PARADISE LOST

by

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of Loyola University In Partial Fulfillment of
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LIFE

Joseph Matthew Kuntz was born in Cleveland, Ohio, May 30, 1928.

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pretty piece of colored glass. Or if one were to discover a fragment, no matter what size, broken from the world's greatest cathedral, he would have only a stone. True, the glass and the stone could be used for other purposes, but they would never have the beauty and glory that was theirs as parts of the originals. So too, one may quote a line or two from a great master, but no matter how well those lines may fit the user's purpose they almost necessarily lose something of their original meaning. Consequently, when one is treating of a work of the length, magnitude, and complexity of Paradise Lost, the whole must be taken constantly into consideration if the parts are to have any meaning.

Moreover, before passing judgment on an object we must first know what the object is and what its purpose is. Although no one blames a philosophical thesis because it lacks the linguistic beauty of a Dickens' novel, still, literary pieces have been criticised for not being something that the author never intended them to be.

The purpose in bringing out these points in the beginning is twofold. First, we believe and will attempt to show later that many of the criticisms and opinions enunciated on Paradise Lost were made because the critic either forgot or misunderstood Milton's purpose in writing Paradise Lost. Secondly, we are inclined to agree with C.S. Lewis that much

Miltonic criticism has gone awry because people fail to understand fully the nature and purpose of epic poetry.²

The first point can be handled easily in treating the various criticism and opinions of Paradise Lost. It will be left for a later and more appropriate section of the thesis. The second point is too large a subject to be treated later in summary fashion. Also, many of the basic principles of epic poetry will be needed to prove the thesis. Hence it is certainly useful and almost necessary to review at the outset those basic Aristotelian canons of literary criticism which will later be used to establish this thesis.

Since the problem under consideration in this thesis is a problem connected with an epic poem, the first task is to determine the nature and purpose of an epic. At first glance epic poetry would seem to be like time--everybody knows what it is, but no one cares to define it. Aristotle himself never does, though he discusses epic poetry at some length. R.G. Moulton's definition is far from satisfactory since he completely discounts as valueless the distinction between prose and poetry.³

2 C.S. Lewis, A Preface to Paradise Lost, London, 1944, 1.

3 "Epic poetry, as the term is used here, covers the whole of creative literature from Homer to the latest novel. . . .Of course, the distinction is not to be ignored between narration in verse and narration in prose; . . .but, whatever may be the value of this distinction, it cannot override the

Moulton's views also force us to reject C.M. Bowra's statement that in classifying the types of poetry there is no quarrel about the epic.⁴ Nor is Bowra's own definition of the epic as complete as it might be. It is a good, workable definition, but seems to fail to take into consideration some of the more recent epics, especially Dante's and Milton's.⁵ Clearly, then, a definition of epic must be decided upon before proceeding. But rather than reconstruct here an Aristotelian definition, we will accept C.M. Gayley's definition as being most in accord with Aristotelian principles.⁶

The epic in general, ancient and modern, may be described as a dispassionate recital, in dignified rhythmic narrative, of a momentous theme or action filled by heroic characters and supernatural agencies under the control of a sovereign destiny.⁷

So much for the definition of epic poetry.

fundamental conception of epic as a narrative creation." R.G. Moulton, The Modern Study of Literature, Chicago, 1915, 132.

4 C.M. Bowra, From Virgil to Milton, London, 1945, 1.

5 "An epic poem is by common consent a narrative of some length and deals with events which have a certain grandeur and importance and come from a life of action. . ." Ibid.

6 Since Aristotle nowhere defines epic poetry, the differentiating notes of epic as a species of narrative poetry must be gathered from various parts of the Poetics. Aristotle's main treatment of the epic is in Chapters V, XV, and XXIII-XXV.

7 C.M. Gayley, Methods and Materials of Literary Criticism, Boston, 1899, 424.

As regards the purpose of epic poetry, Aristotle says no more of the epic than he does of all fine art, i.e. its purpose is to give pleasure.⁸ However, Aristotle does assign a specific purpose to tragedy: it must inspire fear and pity.⁹ This brings out at once one of the basic differences between tragedy and epic poetry. For neither the final triumph of Achilles and the Greeks¹⁰ nor the return of Odysseus to his home¹¹ arouse fear or pity. Yet Aristotle extolls both as models of epic poetry.¹²

That the general purpose of epic poetry is to give pleasure has already been shown; but that is the purpose of all art. The special purpose of epic poetry seems to be to give pleasure by recounting outstanding actions of great men. This is what we shall call the primary purpose. Now together with this primary purpose there is also a secondary purpose in every

8 Aristotle, Poetics, trans., S.H. Butcher, Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art, 4th ed., London, 1951, 15. Hereafter this work will be referred to merely as Butcher, Aristotle's Theory.

9 Ibid., 124-128.

10 Homer, The Iliad, trans., W.H.D. Rouse, New York, 1950, 282. All further matter from the Iliad will be taken from this translation unless otherwise noted.

11 Homer, The Odyssey, trans., E.V. Rieu, New York, 1946, 310-311. All further matter from the Odyssey will be taken from this translation unless otherwise noted.

12 Aristotle, Poetics, IV, VIII.

epic, i.e., the author's special purpose in writing this particular epic. A simple review of the epics clearly shows this.

Homer was a story teller singing the praises of two legendary Greek heroes. His secondary purpose was to extoll Grecian ideals. Virgil had a slightly different purpose. His age was the culmination of Roman conquests, laws, and culture. His secondary purpose in writing the Aeneid was to show that Rome was founded by a man who possessed the perfection of Roman virtues, and that Rome's present glory was but the natural consequence of her laborious beginnings--that the adult had achieved all the promise the youth had shown.

With Dante, however, an entirely new secondary purpose entered the field of the epic. Dante was writing of a reality of which Homer and Virgil were ignorant. Living in the main stream of Catholic doctrine and tradition, Dante chose as his topic and as his secondary purpose something heretofore unthought of in the field of the epic. His topic was an idea, and his secondary purpose was the proof of that idea. The topic was the wisdom, justice, and goodness of God; and his secondary purpose was to show how God's wisdom, justice, and goodness are manifested to men in the next world. In a sense, Dante is almost proving, or attempting to prove, a thesis. Thus, with Dante the "idea" or "thesis" epic was born.

Following Dante's pattern, Milton chose an idea or

thesis as the topic of his epic. He was avowedly attempting to justify the ways of God to mankind as his secondary purpose in writing Paradise Lost.¹³

But enough for the nature and purpose of the epic; attention must now be turned to the epic hero. Since the nature of the epic hero is essential to the proof of this thesis, some attempt at a satisfactory definition must be made. Clearly, the best way to arrive at a definition is to study the heroes of the various well-known epics and to derive their common qualities.

First in time are the Iliad and the Odyssey of Homer. The theme of the Iliad is the wrath of Achilles¹⁴ who is indisputably the hero of the poem. Now how does Homer portray him? In many respects, Achilles is an ideal Greek. He is an outstanding soldier, feared by his enemies, loved and admired by his friends and compatriots. His accomplishments on the field of battle are legend; his wrath is long and deep. Perhaps the word that most aptly describes Achilles is "big." Even though his wrath is really only the pouting of an immature man, still it is big--carried to an extreme to which only a big man could carry it. Moreover, childish though this wrath

¹³ John Milton, Paradise Lost, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes, New York, 1935, 26. Hereafter the poem will be cited as P.L.

¹⁴ Homer, The Iliad, 11.

may be, it must be remembered that the Greeks were childish in many ways. It was almost a characteristic Greek fault. To return to Achilles, however; he is big not only physically but also morally. He has a strong character: i.e., he guides himself by principles. Moreover, Achilles is basically a morally good man--he is noble. He has his faults, but the goodness far outweighs the evil in him.

How different from Achilles is Odysseus! Although Odysseus is a big man by every standard, he is hardly comparable to Achilles. Odysseus is more human, more on the level of the ordinary man, though still above him. Odysseus is more prudent than Achilles, with a prudence that at times descends to mere craftiness.¹⁵ Though his physical trials and sufferings demand great strength and courage, Odysseus is at his best in a situation that demands clear-headedness. How often he talks his way out of a difficulty or gains close friends by his eloquent manner of speaking! On the conversational level he rivals Demosthenes. How often, too, does he escape danger and death by his resourcefulness! His ability to plan and execute is perfect. In many ways Odysseus is more the embodiment of the Greek ideal than is Achilles. For though Achilles is a

¹⁵ This is shown especially in his dealings with Circe, Odyssey, Book X.

bigger man physically and emotionally than Odysseus, Odysseus possesses a greater gift of speech and a sharper intellect. His nobility extends to his intellectual and social nature as well as to his moral nature. But different as these two epic heroes are, it is around them that the Greek epics are woven.

Virgil, however, presents us with a different type of hero. For all their greatness, Achilles and Odysseus have their faults. Aeneas has none. One wonders if Aeneas has blood in his veins. For example, once it is clearly the will of the gods that he leave Troy, Aeneas leaves and with hardly a tear for his dead wife.¹⁶ So, too, through most of his trials and labors, Aeneas remains emotionally aloof. Even in his love affair with Dido, where there are just the first stirrings of really human emotions, they are quieted in the cold light of reason.¹⁷ For this love affair is contrary to the will of the gods. Once Aeneas realizes this, he calms his emotions and again sets sail for his future homeland. In brief, one gets the impression that Aeneas is little more than an embodied intellect--and an intellect which is completely subservient to the will of the gods. Perhaps this sketch of Aeneas is a bit

¹⁶ Virgil, *Aeneid*, The Loeb Classical Library, no place, n.d., Book II, 347.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, Book IV, 433.

overdrawn; but it is so drawn to bring out the difference in treatment of epic heroes by different authors. Yet each author portrayed the hero of his epic as a noble person.

It is also true that all of these heroes are the recipients of favors from the gods in one way or another. And if it be allowed that Dante is the hero of the Divine Comedy, he too is favored in a special way by God. Sometimes the reason is given why this person receives divine gifts at a particular time, but this is not always so. But with or without reasons assigned for the divine blessing, the hero is always a chosen child of the gods.

Finally, the epic must center around the hero. This seems obvious. But in the "idea" or "thesis" epic the poem centers around the hero in such a way that through the hero the secondary purpose of the epic is fulfilled. This will be demonstrated fully in Chapter III where this point will be taken up in detail.

After this discussion have any qualities common to all the heroes studied been found? Can a definition of the term "epic hero" now be decided upon? First of all, the hero is always a noble character. Secondly, he is an important person among his fellow men. Thirdly, he is a friend of the gods (or of God) and receives favors from them. Finally, around him the poem centers. Or to sum it all up in a defin-

ition we may say that an epic hero is an important person of noble character who is divinely favored by the gods and around whom the poem centers.¹⁸

18 Although no critics has given full consideration to the nature of epic hero, various authors have discussed one or the other of these qualities. For various treatments on these qualities confer: C.M. Bowra, From Virgil to Milton, London, 1945; C.M. Bowra, Heroic Poetry, London, 1952; S.H. Butcher, Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art, London, 1951; C.M. Gayley, Methods and Materials of Literary Criticism, Boston, 1899; V.M. Hamm, The Pattern of Criticism, Milwaukee, 1951; C.S. Lewis, A Preface to Paradise Lost, London, 1944; R.G. Moulton, The Modern Study of Literature, Chicago, 1915; W.H. Sheran, A Handbook of Literary Criticism, New York, 1905; M. Van Doren, The Noble Voice, New York, 1946.

CHAPTER II

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE OPINIONS OF ADVERSARIES

For an orderly study of the various opinions on the subject of the hero of Paradise Lost it will first be necessary to group the critics according to the opinions they hold on this subject. Within each group they will be considered with respect to their importance in the field of literary criticism. Schematically the plan may be represented thus:

Christ	Milton	Satan	Adam
Addison	Suarat	Hazlitt	S. Johnson
		Blake	Richardson
		Ruskin	Landor
		Shelley	Tillyard
		Macauly	
		Raleigh	
		Murray	

The opinions of Addison and Suarat are singular, and attention is drawn to them at once. Since Addison is the more

famous in the world of letters, it is only proper to give consideration first to him.

Addison clearly and definitely states that the Messiah is the hero of Paradise Lost. But his reasons are put briefly and without explanation and are, consequently, difficult to understand fully.

The Paradise Lost is an epic, or narrative poem, and he that looks for an hero in it, searches for that which Milton never intended; but if he will needs fix the name of an hero upon any person in it, it is certainly the Messiah who is hero, both in the principal action, and in the chief episodes.¹

This is the sum total of Addison's views on the matter. His opinion is readily broken down into three points.

First, he claims that Milton never intended the poem to have a hero. Secondly, Addison settles on the Messiah as the hero only for those who must "needs fix the name of hero."² In other words, his determination upon any hero at all would seem to be a mere sop. Finally, having fixed upon a hero, Addison alleges that it is the Messiah, "both in the principal action and in the episodes."³ Exactly what Addison means by this last statement is not clear. It is my conjecture that he

1 Joseph Addison, "The Spectator," 297, The Works of Joseph Addison, ed, Richard Hurd, London, 1900, III, 200.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

is making the Messiah the chief actor because He plays an important part in the main action and in the main episodes.

However, does Christ fulfill the definition of an epic hero? No one questions the facts that in the poem Christ is divinely favored, noble, and important. But the story does not seem to center around Christ for the following reasons.

First of all, Christ makes only four speeches in the whole of Paradise Lost.⁴ Considering the number of speeches in the poem, this is an exceptionally small number for the purported hero to make.

Secondly, Christ appears only infrequently in the poem, and when He does appear He is always second to His Father. In fact, the Messiah is portrayed as being a perfect mirror of God. Since no one claims God to be the hero, it is difficult to understand how His "reflection" can be the hero.

Thirdly, Christ's principal action in the epic would seem to be His conquest of Satan and his crew and His eviction of them from heaven. This conquest is hardly the principal action of Paradise Lost. In the poem, Christ's conquest of Satan is only a story within the main story: Raphael recounts the event only at Adam's request. Since

⁴ Cf. P.L., Book III, 114-156; Book III, 227-235; Book VI, 723-745; Book VI, 801-823.

Raphael's story does not center around Christ's action, the poem as a whole can hardly center around Christ. Consequently, Christ does not fulfill all the qualifications of an epic hero, and so Christ is not the hero.

Now let us turn our attention to Denis Suarat's opinion: Milton is the hero of Paradise Lost. Having rejected successively Satan, Christ, God, and Adam as possible heroes of the epic⁵ Suarat continues:

The hero of Paradise Lost is Milton himself. . . . He it is, and not God or the Son, that overcomes Satan. He follows him in all his enterprises, stigmatizes them with one adjective, one line. He exposes Satan so passionately that he forgets Satan's natural enemies; he takes their place before the enemy. What need has Milton of a hero in his poem? He is his own hero.

Nor was it entirely his egotism, however largely unconscious, that lured him into this attitude. There was a deeper cause: Milton had Satan in himself and wanted to drive him out. He had felt passion, pride sensuality. The deep pleasure he takes in his creation of Satan is the joy of liberating, purging himself of the evil in himself, by concentrating it, outside himself in a work of art.⁶

Although this is not entirely without merit, for every writer portrays something of himself, it seems to be weak chiefly in five points.

First, Suarat introduces an entirely new concept of

⁵ Denis Suarat, Milton, Man and Thinker, London, 1946, 183.

⁶ Ibid., 184.

the epic hero without anywhere giving his reasons supporting this concept. A hero is always one of the characters in the story. In a sense, the author, as author, is usually an entirely foreign element as far as the plot is concerned. True, Milton at times openly injects his own opinions on various points,⁷ but he never once enters the story as such. Consequently, Suarat is introducing a character into the story that Milton never put there. In the same stroke he makes this new character the hero. This seems erroneous.

Secondly, Suarat is, it seems, reading the poem too subjectively. However, if Suarat could ever conclusively prove that Paradise Lost is the story of Milton's conquest of his lower nature, he would undoubtedly prove at the same time that Paradise Lost was the greatest work ever written. For, granted Suarat's opinion, no man has ever written so beautifully, so majestically of his own inner struggles. But is Milton writing of his own inner conflict? Not if he is writing an epic, a point which Suarat admits. Epic is a species of narrative poetry; a lyric gives the author's feelings and ideas. If Milton were writing of himself, then Paradise Lost is a lyric, not an epic. But Milton is admittedly attempting to "justify

7 Cf., for example, P.L., Book I, 690-699.

the ways of God to man."⁸ Hence he seems to be writing of an objective reality outside himself, and is not merely preening himself on his own personal spiritual triumphs.

Thirdly, there seems to be nothing in the poem to foster this opinion, nor does Suarat ever refer to the poem to prove his assertions. In fact, it would seem that Suarat could not rely on the poem in his defense. For in forming his opinion he seems to have overlooked two important facts: the next two points.

Satan is not conquered. He is condemned to suffer eternally the loss of heaven and to reside in hell. The conquest is not absolutely total. For Satan flees for a time the locale of hell, comes to earth, and leads man into sin. If Milton is writing of his own experiences with his lower nature, then Suarat is forced to admit that Milton's conquest of himself is far from successful. But it seems, rather, that Milton is writing of an objective reality. Hence Milton realizes that, in a sense, the story of Paradise Lost is not finished, nor will it be finished till the end of time. Then only will Satan be bound forever in the locale of hell. Today he roams through both hell and earth. His complete subjection is yet

8 P.L., Book I, 26

to come. Here is another point which Suarat seems to have overlooked completely.

In general, and this is the fifth point, Suarat seems not to have taken into consideration the entire poem. If Paradise Lost is Milton's spiritual biography, why does he write the last nine books? Nothing in them supports Suarat's opinion. On the contrary, it would appear that the poem contradicts his position.

Having crossed these "brooks" we now come to one of the main streams of Miltonic criticism on this point: viz., those who hold that Satan is the hero of Paradise Lost. Because this school began with some of the earliest critics of Milton and because the opinion grew as it passed from critic to critic, we shall treat these men, in general, in their chronological order. However, rather than answer each critic individually here, their opinions will first be studied and analyzed. Then the character and role of Satan as portrayed by Milton in Paradise Lost will be studied. From this study it will be shown that he does not fulfill the definition of an epic hero. Finally, the critics will be answered.

First in the long line comes William Blake. His opinion has often been quoted by later critics and hence deserves primary consideration. His own views are briefly stated.

The reason Milton wrote in fetters when he wrote of Angels and Gods, and at liberty when of Devils and Hell, is because he was a true Poet and of the Devil's party without knowing it.⁹

This is the passage which many subsequent critics cite to show that Blake thought that Satan was the hero of Paradise Lost. At the outset I must admit that I have difficulty understanding Blake. Hence the following study of his position is offered with some hesitation.

First of all, it should be noted that man is not even mentioned. Secondly, he implies that Milton wrote with greater ease when writing about Satan than when he was writing about God. This, again by implication, is the reason why he painted a better Satan than God, artistically speaking. In passing it might be mentioned that if Milton wrote "in fetters" when portraying God, it was because of the difficulty of the subject. To represent God, a pure spirit, in concrete language is a hard task. For God there is no past, present, and future. There is only the eternal now. To show God planning, deciding, acting in that eternal now would strain the talents of any poet. As for Milton's actual portrayal of God and Satan, that will be treated in the next chapter.

Next in line comes Hazlitt. His position is definite, his reasons clear. For Hazlitt, "Satan is the most heroic

⁹ William Blake, "Marriage of Heaven and Hell," Prose and Poetry of William Blake, London, 1946, 182.

subject that was ever chosen for a poem; and the execution is as perfect as the design is lofty."¹⁰ That is, Hazlitt claims that Satan's nobility earns for him the title of hero. He then proceeds to give his reasons, working on the notions of the perfection of execution and the loftiness of design.

Hazlitt's first reason for his position is Satan's audacity. Satan was the first to defy God's power and authority.¹¹ Not only did he defy it, Satan even attempted to usurp it. No one before or since has ever planned and attempted so bold a design. Moreover, Satan succeeded in gaining to his cause one third of the hosts of heaven, who were eventually condemned to hell with him forever. As a punishment for so bold an endeavor Satan's punishment was the greatest: "but not so his despair, for his fortitude was as great as his sufferings."¹² Having lost in his attempt and having been condemned, Satan accepted hell "with inflexible determination."¹³ He endured as only a truly great person could endure.

¹⁰ Jacob Zeitlin, Hazlitt on English Literature, Oxford University Press, New York, 1913, 110.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

Yet Satan did more than merely endure. Even in hell the rebel angels owned him as their leader. This fed Satan's pride. Furthermore, Satan feels that:

All is not lost:— th' unconquerable will
And study of revenge, immortal hate,
And courage never to submit or yield
And what else is not to be overcome?¹⁴

are still his. "The sense of his punishment seems lost in the magnitude of it [Satan's pride];. . .the loss of infinite happiness to himself is compensated in thought by the power of inflicting infinite misery on others."¹⁵ Yet Satan is not the personification of evil, but rather of self-will.¹⁶ Everything else, every good, every evil are subordinate to his love of power and contempt of suffering.¹⁷ For despite his overwhelming defeat, Satan rallies his forces, founds a new empire in hell, and determines and undertakes the conquest of a new world.¹⁸

Although many claim that Milton has painted too magnificent a picture of Satan, Hazlitt holds that Milton relied on the justice of his cause and only gave the devil his due.

14 P.L., Book I, 106-109, as quoted by Hazlitt.

15 Zeitlin, Hazlitt on English Literature, 110.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.

Hence, answering the objection of some that Milton was too liberal in portraying Satan and thereby injured the cause he professed to defend, Hazlitt says:

Considering the nature of his subject, he would be equally in danger of running into this fault, from his faith in religion and his love of rebellion; and perhaps each of these motives had its full share in determining the choice of his subject.¹⁹

Finally, Hazlitt refers to all of Satan's speeches both in hell and to Eve, to show his "decided superiority of character."²⁰ A superiority of character which had, in brief, led Satan to attempt to overthrow God, enabled him to establish a new empire in hell, and thence set forth to war against God and to conquer mankind.

Following in Hazlitt's footsteps, Shelley was the next to propose Satan as the hero of Milton's first epic. Like Hazlitt, Shelley is entranced by Satan's physical power, by his boldness, and by his purported nobility of character evidenced in the way in which he accepts his defeat.

Nothing can exceed the energy and magnificence of the character of Satan as expressed in Paradise Lost. It is a mistake to suppose that he could ever have been intended for the popular personification of evil. Implacable hate, patient cunning, and a sleepless refinement of device to inflict the extremest anguish on an enemy, these things are evil; and

19 Ibid., 112-113.

20 Ibid., 113.

though venial in a slave, are not to be forgiven in a tyrant; although redeemed by much that ennoble his defeat in one subdued, are marked by all that dishonors his conquest in the victor.²¹

This is the first point in Shelley's argument: Satan is a nobler person than God because God is a tyrant, cruel in victory and Satan is a leader, courageous in defeat. As a second argument, Shelley adduces Satan's tenacity of will and adherence to principle.

Milton's Devil as a moral being is as far superior to his God, as one who perseveres in some purpose which he has conceived to be excellent in spite of adversity and torture, is to one who in the cold security of undoubted triumph inflicts upon his enemy the most horrible revenge, not from an mistaken notion of inducing him to repent of a perseverance in enmity, but with the alleged design of exasperating him to deserve new torments.²²

For Shelley, then, Satan is the hero because his is noble physically and morally. His physical nobility is manifested by his tireless energy which enabled him to war ceaselessly on God. Satan's moral nobility is evidenced by his unwavering adherence to principle and his patient acceptance of his sufferings.

Next comes a man whose opinions on the hero of Paradise Lost can only be inferred--John Ruskin. For him, the principal action of the poem is the fall of the angels.

21 Percy Bysshe Shelley, A Defense Of Poetry, ed. Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, London, 1889, 10.

22 Ibid.

Consequently, we are forced to conclude that he believes that Satan is the hero of this epic.

Milton's account of the most important event in his whole system of the universe, the fall of the angels, is evidently unbelievable to himself; and the more so that it is wholly founded on, and in a great part spoiled and degraded from, Hesiod's account of the decisive war of the younger gods with the Titans. The rest of his poem is a picturesque drama, in which every artifice of invention is visibly and consciously employed; not a single fact being, for an instant, conceived as tenable by any living faith.²³

It might be remarked here in passing that whether or not the fall of the angels was the most important event in the universe is beside the point. The point is that it was not "his [Milton's] . . . system of the universe."²⁴ This basic system is a proven theological fact.

A little earlier than Ruskin, but of much less importance as a literary critic, was Macaulay. He stresses the resemblance between Prometheus and Satan and concludes that Satan is the greater of the two.²⁵ In summarizing Satan's character Macaulay merely says:

The might of his [Satan's] intellectual nature is victorious over the extremity of pain. Amidst

23 John Ruskin, Sesame and Lilies, New York, 1878, 136-137.

24 Ibid.

25 Thomas Babington Macaulay, Milton, Chicago, n.d., 78.

agonies which cannot be conceived without horror, he deliberates, resolves, and even exalts. Against the sword of Michael, against the thunder of Jehovah, against the flaming lake and the marl burning with solid fire, against the prospect of an eternity of unintermitted misery, his spirit bears up unbroken, resting on its own innate energies, requiring no support from anything external, not even from hope itself.²⁶

Like his predecessors, Macaulay bases his proof on Satan's nobility of character, which, according to Macaulay, is obviously manifested by his strength of character.

Finally we come to the last two adversaries, Raleigh and Gilbert Murray. Raleigh, too, is entranced by the character and power of Satan, but his chief reason for naming Satan as the hero is, he claims, that the poem centers around Satan and his achievements.

Some kind of internal blindness must have visited Milton if he did not perceive what must inevitably be the effect of all this on the sympathies and interest of the reader. And the irony of the thing is that his own sympathies were not proof against the trial that he had devised for them. He lavished all his power, all his skill, and in spite of himself, the greater part of his sympathy on the splendid figure of Satan. He avoids calling Paradise Lost "an heroic poem;" when it was printed in 1667, the title-page ran merely--Paradise Lost, A Poem in Ten Books. Had he inserted the word "heroic," the question as to who is the hero would have been broached at once. And to that question, if it be fairly faced, only one answer can be given. . . . It was not for nothing that Milton stultified the professed moral of his poem, and emptied it of

26 Ibid.

all spiritual content. He was not fully conscious, it seems, of what he was doing; but he builded better than he knew. A profound poetic instinct taught him to preserve epic truth at all costs. And the epic value of Paradise Lost is centered in the character and achievements of Satan.²⁷

To answer here a minor point, Raleigh claims that Milton never called Paradise Lost by its full title "an heroic poem."²⁸ We quote:

Since first this Subject for Heroic Song
Pleas'd me long choosing, and beginning late:²⁹

From the context, the "Heroic Song" cannot be understood as being anything but Paradise Lost itself. The poem answers Raleigh by itself on this point.

A rather new approach enters the lists with Gilbert Murray. He not only sees a resemblance between Prometheus and Satan, but even denies that Satan is a Biblical character.

Even his [Milton's] subject, which no doubt he thought to be Christian or Hebraic, consists of an old Greek subject, the Titanomachia, or the Battle of the Gods and Titans, intertwined with or followed by, the story of the Fall in Genesis. There was no Hebrew legend about Satan: Milton's hero, though bearing the Hebrew name of Satan, is really Greek--part Typhon and part Prometheus. And it is perhaps noteworthy also how, on the whole, the later books of Paradise Lost, where the poet is following Christian and Hebrew originals, are inferior to the

27 Walter Raleigh, Milton, London, 1900, 132-133.

28 Ibid.

29 P.L., Book IX, 25-26.

earlier books, in which he was more free to indulge his natural love for Greek memories.³⁰

Murray claims that the "Later books of the poem are inferior to the earlier books."³¹ Exactly which are the "later books" and in what way they are inferior to the "earlier books", Murray does not say. On the main point of interest here, viz., why is Satan the hero of Paradise Lost, Murray is silent. He merely states that Satan is the hero and then goes on.

With Gilbert Murray we end our study of the "Satanic" school of Miltonic criticism. Our list of adversaries has not been exhaustive. To give but two examples, Hamilton³² and Musgrave³³ have been completely omitted. But outstanding literary men from the time of Milton to the present were quoted to show the general trends and to give an overall view of this school.

Now, in general, these critics have assigned one of two reasons for saying that Satan is the hero of Paradise Lost.

³⁰ Gilbert Murray, The Classical Tradition in Poetry, London, 1927, 8.

³¹ Ibid.

³² G. Rostrevor Hamilton, Hero or Fool: A Study of Milton's Satan, London, 1944.

³³ S. Musgrave, "Is the Devil an Ass?", Review of English Studies, XXI, 1945, 302-315.

They say either that Satan is the hero because he is the most noble character in the epic, or that Satan is the hero because the epic centers around him. We are willing to admit that Satan is an important character both in reality and in this epic; but one quality of an epic hero he obviously does not possess--he is not favored by God throughout the entire poem. Moreover, we will attempt to show by an analysis of Satan's character and role as portrayed by Milton in Paradise Lost that Satan was not noble and that the poem does not center around him. Thus it will have been proven that Satan is not the hero, and at the same time an answer will have been given in a general way to those critics who claim that Satan is the hero.

When Satan first speaks he laments his defeat and states the principles by which he now proposes to live. First of all, he will never sue for pardon or do aught to close the gap between heaven and hell. Secondly, Satan declares eternal war on heaven, either "by force or guile."³⁴ As Hazlitt has well said, Satan accepts hell with inflexible determination and with the vow³⁵ "never to submit or yield."³⁶ Yet:

So spoke th' Apostate Angel, though in pain,

34 P.L., Book I, 84-125.

35 Zeiltin, Hazlitt on English Literature, 110.

36 P.L., Book I, 108.

Vaunting aloud, but rackt with deep despair.³⁷

Note carefully the picture Milton gives here of Satan. He brags, boasts, lays plans, but it is all "sound and fury signifying nothing."³⁸ Satan himself has little hope for the future. He vaunts, but feels only despair. This brings up an interesting question. Is Satan merely a proud braggart, or a real leader? That is, is he a person who can really inspire others and lead them on to the greatest of deeds when the last hope seems gone, or is he just a hollow man, a man who says much and does nothing?

Satan's next speech is made to encourage Beelzebub. In true soldierly fashion, he admonishes the defeatist attitude of his lieutenant:

Fall'n Cherub, to be weak is miserable
Doing or suffering.³⁹

Satan knows men, or better angels, and his admonition is one to fire the heart of a soldier. For weakness is a fault that no warrior would admit, especially not one in so high a command as was Beelzebub. But prudently, too, Satan makes the reprehension brief. For he immediately begins to exhort Beelzebub, painting pictures of victory in future battles against their

37 P.L., Book I, 125-126.

38 William Shakespeare, Macbeth, ed. Henry Irving, London, 1929, Act V, Scene 3, 28.

39 P.L., Book I, 156-159.

oppressor. To put the crowning point on his whole argument, Satan reinstates Beelzebub as his lieutenant by suggesting to him that the two of them reassemble their forces, repair their losses, and see

What reinforcement we may gain from Hope
If not what resolution from despair.⁴⁰

That last line is a masterpiece. Difficulties are either the stepping stones to greatness or the stumbling blocks to defeat. For Satan, facing the greatest of difficulties, it offers only a stepping stone to the greatest success. And without a moment's delay, he begins to move toward the burning marl. The whole scene seems to portray a great leader.

But this is only a prelude. For once they gain solid land, Satan looks over his army. He admits that the scene is doleful, but counters:

The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n.⁴¹

and concludes by saying that it is

Better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heav'n.⁴²
The determination of Satan is overpowering. Here truly seems to be a leader that everyone would follow and respect. And

40 P.L., Book I, 190-195.

41 P.L., Book I, 254-255.

42 P.L., Book I, 262.

when he commands his army to rise, they do so without a moment's delay. Moreover, they are ashamed to have their leader find them thus. For an instant they forget their overwhelming defeat and do not even feel the pains of hell.⁴³ Immediately they begin to assemble in their accustomed ranks. Only a great leader could have such control over his army.

Once they are assembled, Satan addresses them in words of praise for the past and encouragement for the future. Again he tells his plans for conquests in forthcoming battles, and ends with the challenge,

. War, then War
Open or understood must be resolv'd.⁴⁴

And in answer the fallen angels draw their flaming swords and raise a cry that is heard in heaven. But in true soldierly fashion, their celebration is short, for there is work to be done. Immediately they fall to the task of raising a palace for their king wherein the leaders could hold their first council of war.

Satan, enthroned in grandeur far beyond any known in this world, opens the council with another magnificent speech to all present. He again proposes eternal war on heaven, but allows freedom of speech to all so that the best means for

⁴³ P.L., Book I, 330-336.

⁴⁴ P.L., Book I, 661-662.

this war may be discovered and resolved upon. Implicitly Satan is paying a great compliment to his leaders. Yet it is here that Milton inserts a rather nasty remark.

Satan sat exalted, by merit rais'd
To that bad eminence; and from despair
Thus high uplifted beyond hope, aspires
Beyond thus high, insatiate to pursue
Vain War with Heaven, and by success untaught
His proud imagination thus displayed.⁴⁵

What does it mean? First of all, it would seem that the only way a person could be exalted to a bad eminence would be by being evil himself. In other words, Satan is the worst of the entire crew. Moreover, though Satan preens himself on his glorious deeds, Milton hastens to point out that they are only imaginary, not real, feats. This throws a light on all Satan's former speeches. The great feats of arms that he praises himself and his soldiers for are more imaginary than real. But so great is Satan's imagination that even he is deluded into believing these lies of his mind. Added to that is Satan's gift of oratory by which he can move others to feel and think as he does. But behind it all there is absolutely nothing. For all the fighting Satan has only hell to show. Exactly what type of person is Satan then?

Milton answers this question very well, and at the same time gives us a beautiful picture of the real Satan at

⁴⁵ P.L., Book II, 5-10.

the end of the council of war. When Beelzebub finishes proposing his plans for the future, Milton remarks:

. Thus Beelzebub
Pleaded his devilish Counsel, first devis'd
By Satan, and in part proposed; for whence,
But from the Author of all ill could Spring
So deep a malice, to confound the race
Of mankind in one root, and Earth with Hell
To mingle and involve, done all to spite
The great Creator? 46

In other words, despite Satan's magnanimous offer at the beginning of the debate to use the best plan proposed, he is careful to see to it that his own ideas finally win out. And to top it all, Satan himself proposes that he undertake the hazardous task alone, and immediately closes the council.

. . . lest from his resolution rais'd
Others among the chief might offer now
(Certain to be refus'd) what erst they fear'd:
And so refus'd might in opinion stand
His rivals, winning cheap the high repute. 47

Obviously, Satan is looking only for his own glory. Hell and all its inhabitants exist, as far as he is concerned, merely to serve him and his purposes. He is not looking for the betterment or welfare of his soldiers, but only for his own glory. Everything else is subordinate to that. Such a person could hardly be a really great leader.

After the council, Satan immediately begins his

46 P.L., Book II, 378-385.

47 P.L., Book II, 468-472.

flight for this new world in search of conquest. He is momentarily stopped at the gates of hell by Sin and Death who at first refuse him release into chaos. But Satan wins them to his side with promises of a life of peace and ease after his conquest.⁴⁸ Here Satan holds out the prospect of the very thing that Sin and Death desired most. They had suffered in his defeat, now they were to share in the spoils of his victory. Satan's generosity is tremendous. He takes on himself all the dangers, hardships, and labor and promises the fruit of it all to his followers. He is apparently thinking only of them, not of himself. How few leaders in the course of history have acted thus!

Yet, did Satan really have any intention of fulfilling these promises? When he becomes lost in Chaos, he asks directions to this new world from the lords of Chaos. Naturally, Satan must offer some explanation for wanting this information. Note carefully what Satan says. First, he claims he is out to conquer this new world to revenge himself on God.⁴⁹ Secondly, if he is successful, Satan will return this world to the rulers of Chaos, from whom God usurped it, that they might reign there with their havoc.⁵⁰ If we recall that Satan had already

⁴⁸ P.L., Book II, 699.

⁴⁹ P.L., Book II, 815-845.

⁵⁰ P.L., Book II, 981-986.

promised this new world to his fellow devils and to Sin and Death, his duplicity becomes quite apparent. He offered it to his followers and to Sin and Death as a place of ease and peace. Now he offers it to the lords of Chaos as a place on which they can pour havoc and destruction to their heart's content. The two promises are obviously contradictory. The only consistent element thus far has been that Satan wants to conquer this new world. Exactly who would get the spoils would be interesting, but Milton never fully answers this question.

When Satan reaches earth, doubts and fears about the coming battle begin to assail him. Here Milton gives us a true picture of Satan. He describes Satan as being stirred to the very bottom of

The Hell within him, for within him Hell
He brings, and round about him, nor from Hell
One step no more than from himself can fly
By change of place.⁵¹

And to add emphasis to this idea, Milton puts almost the same words into the mouth of Satan himself.

Me Miserable! which way shall I fly
Infinite wrath, infinite despair?
Which way I fly is Hell; myself am Hell.⁵²
Wh

51 P.L., Book IV, 15-19.

52 P.L., Book IV, 73-75.

What a far cry this is from Satan's speech to
Beelzebub in Hell!

The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n.⁵³

Here again Satan contradicts himself, but at least this time he has come to an objective truth: he can never escape hell even though he flies its locale. Satan bears hell with him wherever he goes. Moreover, Satan admits here that he is the cause of all the sufferings inflicted on him and on his followers. It is also notable that Satan takes pains to exculpate God from any blame. God had only showed goodness to Satan, and Satan had returned only evil to God. He was once one of the highest angels, but his pride and ambition were not satisfied. He wanted to rule and have God serve him. The parallel with Shakespeare's Macbeth is quite obvious. Both Satan and Macbeth were ambitious, and their ambition only led to their ruin. Milton might well have put Macbeth's words into the mouth of Satan here.

I have lived long enough: my way of life
Is fall'n into the sear, the yellow leaf;
And that which should accompany old age,
As love, honour, obedience, troops of friends,
I must not look to have; but, in their stead,
Curses, not loud, but deep, mouth-honour, breath,
Which the poor heart would fain deny, and dare not.⁵⁴

53 P.L., Book I, 254-255.

54 Shakespeare, Macbeth, Act V, Scene 3, 24-30.

On the other hand, Shakespeare could just as well have made Macbeth say:

. . . Ay me, they little know
How dearly I abide that boast so vain,
Under what torments inwardly I groan:
While they adore me on the Throne of Hell;
With Diadem and Sceptre high advanc'd.
The lower still I fall, only Supreme
In misery; such joy Ambition finds.⁵⁵

Ambition had led them both to misery, and both wish that they had not given in to their desire for power. But both are caught in their own webs, and they themselves taste the lots they would have forced on others.

But to return to the point. Satan is twice more made to state that his purpose in coming to earth is to find a place of peace and ease for his followers.⁵⁶ The second time, however, Satan's purpose is unveiled. For Gabriel tells Satan that if he were the true leader he claims to be he never would have led his armies in revolt and, consequently, brought upon them all their present pain and misery.⁵⁷ The whole point of Gabriel's speech is merely that a leader must first be true and faithful to someone or something higher than himself. Only then can he be true to those under him.

55 P.L., Book IV, 86-92.

56 P.L., Book IV, 388-392 and 885-901.

57 P.L., Book IV, 946-961.

This falsehood of Satan's to his crew is brought out in his first speech in heaven. He tells Beelzebub to gather their troops and lead them to the North under the pretext of preparing there a reception for the newly anointed Son.⁵⁸ Once in the North, however, Satan reveals his real intent--revolt against God and the Son.⁵⁹ In his speech to the angels, Satan's purpose for revolt is also brought to light: he wants to rule in heaven. The irony of it all is that Satan incites the others by telling them that they will lose their glory, rights, and freedom under the rule of the Son. Yet it is noteworthy that Satan does not promise them better conditions under his rule. All he offers is freedom from their present lord. Hence, one wonders what heaven would have been like under Satan. That there would not have been unbounded liberty and freedom for all is obvious. For Satan is leading his armies in the cause of Satan. His only aim is to establish himself as monarch. As is brought out quite clearly, he could not offer them more than they already had. So the only reason Satan assembles his armies and leads them to revolt is that he needs their help. He is not a true

58 P.L., Book V, 673-693.

59 P.L., Book V, 772-802.

leader or friend. For he looks on them as mere helpers to attain his own glory. What would have become of them had that glory been attained?

The point of the discussion is simply this. Critics have seen a strength of character in Satan. Now we agree that Satan is a decidedly superior character, but not in every sense of the term. Satan is undoubtedly a strong character because he lives by principle, which alone is the guide of all his actions. Moreover, we must admit that Milton does not even portray God or the Son as acting on principle to the same extent as he does Satan; for God tempers the principle of justice with mercy.⁶⁰ That Adam and Eve do not act solely on principle is evidenced by the fact of their fall. But despite the fact that Satan is portrayed as possessing the strongest character, he is also portrayed as possessing the most evil character. For strength of character is determined by the extent to which a person acts on principles. However, strength of character is not synonymous with goodness of character. For if a person adheres inflexibly to principles of evil, as does Satan, his character is bad. And no one has ever claimed that a person with an admittedly bad character was noble.

So much for Satan's character; consideration must now be given to his role in Paradise Lost, i.e., how does

60 P.L., Book III, 130-134.

Satan figure in man's first disobedience and the loss of Eden?

First of all, according to Milton Adam falls because he is seduced by Satan.⁶¹ When we first meet Adam and Eve they are extremely happy and content.⁶² They praise and thank God for His goodness towards them, and look with joy upon the one pledge of their loyalty to Him--not to eat the fruit of the tree of Knowledge. This one prohibition is light, and they are thankful that through it they are able to render God some service. The idea of disobeying God and eating the fruit appears absurd to them. Satan must have understood their views and must also have studied Adam and Eve quite well. For the way in which he brings about the fall is another of his psychological masterpieces.

First he prepares Eve for the actual temptation by a dream in which the fruit of the tree of Knowledge is made to appear an unmitigated good.⁶³ But the next day Raphael comes to earth and relates to Adam the story of the fall of Satan and his legions and warns Adam and Eve that Satan is also trying to lead them away from God. The next morning

61 P.L., Book III, 130-131.

62 P.L., Book IV, 411 et seq.

63 P.L., Book V, 31-93.

all the trouble begins. Eve desires to work alone that thus they might accomplish more. Why this sudden desire to be apart from Adam Milton does not explain. Conjectures could be made but they would always remain conjectures. The important point is that Eve feels self-sufficient to withstand any possible attacks of Satan.⁶⁴ The parallel between the beginning of Satan's downfall and the beginning of Eve's downfall is obvious. Satan had urged, though on a slightly different level, the notion of self-sufficiency on the angels when fomenting the revolt in heaven.⁶⁵ Adam admonishes Eve of this and even warns her that Satan is most likely to tempt them under the guise of good to do what is wrong.⁶⁶ But Eve manages to win Adam to her will and sets off alone.

To find Eve alone was what Satan hoped for only in his wildest dreams. Yet, as he ambles through the garden in the guise of a snake, he finds his dream come true. At first he is taken aback with her beauty, and pauses to admire her. But Satan soon come to himself and proceeds to set his trap. First he plays before Eve to attract her attention. As soon as Eve pauses in her labor to look at him, Satan begins to

64 P.L., Book IX, 273-289.

65 P.L., Book VI, 853-863.

66 P.L., Book IX, 351-375.

speak. His first words are reminiscent of Eve's dream. She is extolled above all creature for her grace and beauty but pitied because there is only one to admire her when she should have numberless gods to wait on her.⁶⁷

Eve, of course, is amazed to find a brute with the power of human speech and asks how the snake came by it. The serpent tells how he chanced to eat of the fruit of a certain tree, and having eaten was endowed with reason and speech. He also hints that if the fruit has raised him thus high above his fellows, it will do even more for Eve. So at Eve's request the serpent leads her to the forbidden tree. When Eve remonstrates against touching the fruit, the serpent becomes irate and with specious arguments promises that only good can come from such fruit. Finally, the serpent shows himself as the contradiction of all the evil that God has threatened will come of eating the fruit.

So Eve plucks the fruit and eats.

Without too much difficulty Eve foists the fruit on Adam, and with this Satan's victory is won.⁶⁸ His role was to seduce man to disobey God, and he has succeeded.

So much for Satan; now to return to our critics.

67 P.L., Book IX, 532-548.

68 P.L., Book IX, 997.

Hazlitt and Shelley claim that Satan is noble in character. From this discussion it has been shown that he has a strong character, but not a good character, and hence not a noble character. Having answered these men, attention must now be turned to the opinions of Raleigh, Ruskin, Macaulay, and Murray who claim that Paradise Lost centers around Satan and his fall from heaven.

Over and above what has been said regarding Satan's role in Paradise Lost, we claim that the poem does not center around Satan for two reasons: 1) if it did the poem would lack unity; and 2) if it did the last two Books would be irrelevant.

First, the expressed purpose of the poem is to justify the ways of God to man: i.e. to explain why God acts towards man as He does. Now if the fall of Satan is the pivotal point of the poem, no explanation of the theme is offered--no explanation of the ways of God to man. All that is explained is the ways of God to Satan. This will be taken up more fully in the next chapter. But suffice it here to say that if the poem centers around Satan the purpose of the poem is not fulfilled.

Moreover, the theme of the poem is "man's first disobedience."⁶⁹ Again, if the fall of Satan is the central

⁶⁹ P.L., Book I, 1.

point of the poem, no adequate explanation is offered for man's disobedience. Also, there would be no relationship between the theme and the main action of the poem. Consequently, the poem would lack unity. However, no critic, to the best of my knowledge, has ever claimed that Paradise Lost lacked unity.

Secondly, if Paradise Lost centers around Satan, to what purpose are the last two books? They have absolutely no relation to Satan, his fall from heaven, or his war against God. But if the poem centers around Satan, then these last two books are irrelevant to the story--a claim no one has ever made. Consequently, we again must conclude that Satan is not the main character of Paradise Lost.

By way of summary of this chapter, it has been shown that neither Christ, Milton, nor Satan is the hero of Paradise Lost. The various critics who have proposed these characters as heroes have been studied and analyzed, and evidence has been brought against their arguments to show that none of their proposed heroes can possibly be the real hero of Paradise Lost.

CHAPTER III

ADAM, THE HERO OF PARADISE LOST

Before plunging into the proof of the thesis, it is only proper that there be a review of the work already done by those who have held that Adam was the hero of Paradise Lost. This will serve a three-fold purpose: 1) it will be at least an implicit commendation of the work already done by these great critics; 2) it will show the beginnings of the "Adamist" school of criticism and its development to the present day; 3) thus it will bring out in greater relief the arguments and originality of this present thesis. The critics will be treated, as were the "Satanists," with regard to their chronological order and their importance in the field of English letters.

First consideration must be given to the opinions of one of the greatest critics of English literature, the model of English literary critics, Dr. Samuel Johnson. He was one of the earliest critics to espouse the cause of Adam. Johnson, it would seem, assigns two reasons for maintaining that Adam is the hero of Paradise Lost. 1) Reason dictates it, and 2) Adam is successful. Adam's success, according to Johnson

is three-fold: 1) his deceiver is crushed; 2) Adam is restored to his Maker's favor; 3) Adam resumes his human rank.¹ As Johnson says in his own words:

The questions, whether the action of the poem be strictly one, whether the poem can properly be termed heroic, and who is the hero, are raised by such readers as draw their principles of judgment rather from books than from reason. Milton, though he entitled Paradise Lost only a poem, yet call it himself heroic song. Dryden, petulantly and indecently denies the heroism of Adam, because he was overcome; but there is no reason why the hero should not be unfortunate, except established practice, since success and virtue do not go necessarily together. . . . However, if success be necessary, Adam's deceiver was at last crushed; Adam was restored to his Maker's favour, and therefore may securely resume his human rank.²

Although we agree with Johnson that Adam is the hero of Paradise Lost, we question some of the reasons that he proposes. For Adam was not successful by his own unaided efforts. His success, if it can even be called that, was an outright gift from God. Moreover, in the poem itself Satan is not crushed. Adam knows that, and his progeny will have to fight Satan till the end of time. Nor was Adam completely restored to God's favor. He would never again walk and talk with God in the cool of the evening. Only in heaven, which Adam

1 Samuel Johnson, Lives of the English Poets, "Milton" London, n.d., 103.

2 Ibid.

must now earn by a fierce struggle, would he attain again the converse with God that was once his in paradise. Nor did Adam resume his human rank, for he never really lost it. Even after the fall, Adam was still a human being and was still the father of the human race. He lost some of the perfections of humanity, but not humanity itself.

All this, however, is not to discredit Johnson. His basic position is sound, his reasons good. And Johnson has judgment enough to see that a work cannot be evaluated by hidebound norms. Like C.S. Lewis, Johnson at least implicitly admits the growth and development of the epic.³ All this considered the, Johnson can be listed as one of the primary critics of the "Adamite" school.

A man a little earlier than Johnson, but of far less importance in the world of criticism was Johnathan Richardson.⁴ Though we were unable to find any other works on this point from so early a date, we gathered from Richardson that the battle regarding the hero of Paradise Lost was raging when he wrote. For Richardson takes up the cause of Adam against his

³ C.S. Lewis, A Preface to Paradise Lost, London, 1944, 12-18.

⁴ Johnson lived from 1709-1784; Richardson published his Explanatory Notes and Remarks on Milton's Paradise Lost in 1734.

unnamed adversaries and strikes some very telling blows.

Richardson gives but one reason for saying that Adam is the hero of Paradise Lost--Milton intended it so.⁵ After proving that Paradise Lost is an heroic poem Richardson attempts to show that the poem centers around Adam.

'tis [the hero] Adam, Adam, the First the Representative of Human Race; He is the Hero in This Poem, though as in Other Heroic Poems, Superior Beings are introduced. the Business of it is to conduct Man through Variety of Conditions of Happiness and Distress, All terminating in the Utmost Good. From a State of Precarious Innocence, through Temptation, Sin, Repentance, and finally a Secure Recumbency Upon, and Interest in the Supreme Good by the Mediation of his Son.⁶

The only criticism of Richardson that can be made is that he does not clearly and completely prove his assertions. If he had treated the point of the hero of Paradise Lost in the same fashion that he treated the type of poem, by going to the poem itself, this whole debate might well have ended with Richardson. But Richardson rests content with merely proposing his opinion of the poem. He may have thought that others would at once see the truth of his statements or would search them out for themselves. Be all this as it may, the discussion did not end with Richardson. His successors continued to write in

⁵ Johnathan Richardson, Explanatory Notes and Remarks on Milton's Paradise Lost, London, 1734, in the Early Lives of Milton, ed. Helen Darbishire, London, 1932, 316.

⁶ Ibid.

Adam's defense.

Next W.S. Lander, armed with sharp invective against the "Satanists," marched on to the battlefield. Like Addison, Lander offers a hero merely as a sop. But, contrary to Addison, he does assert that if a hero must be named it is Adam, not Satan.

In the Paradise Lost no principal character seems to have been intended. There is neither truth nor wit however in saying that Satan is the hero of the piece, unless, as is usually the case in human life, he is the greatest hero who gives widest sway to the worst passions. It is Adam who acts and suffers most, and on whom the consequences have most influence. This constitutes him the main character.⁷

Although he has judged aright, Lander would seem to contradict himself. After claiming that Paradise Lost. has no hero, he proceeds to prove that Adam is the main character. Perhaps Lander would distinguish between the main character and the hero of an epic poem, but he does not state his distinction. What Lander really seems to be doing here is showing that Adam is a more important character in the poem than is Satan. But he leaves us so little from which to draw a true judgment of his opinion that we can do little more than quote him.

In our own times we find on the field of battle one of the great literary critics of the day, Professor Tillyard.

⁷ Walter Savage Lander, The Works of Walter Savage Lander, London, 1895, II, 60.

From his modern vantage point, Tillyard looks back across both schools of thought on the subject, sums them up, and then enters into the fray himself.

Turning to the hero, I begin with the assumption that Adam or Adam and Eve are hero. . . . The whole trend of the plot and of the geography make Adam and Eve central; and Heaven and Hell fight for them. . . . One reason for the old heresy that Satan is the hero is that on the old interpretation of the crisis Adam had no power of positive action: resistance to Satan was the best that was open to him; he could not even carry the war into Satan's own country and try to win him back to God for Satan was inconvertible. Put the crisis at the reconciliation and the repentance, and positive action can and does take place. And Milton deliberately pits the actions of Adam and Eve against those of Satan, considering them more truly heroic.⁸

Professor Tillyard obviously rests his opinion on three points: 1) the assumption that Adam is the hero; 2) a change of the interpretation of the point of the crisis; and 3) the need and proof of positive action in Adam--three telling arguments.

First, it must be noted that Tillyard begins by assuming that Adam is the hero. Although this may be a legitimate assumption, in itself it does not prove that Adam really is the hero. Moreover, it seems to us that Tillyard never actually proves his assumption. Consequently, it seems that he never really proves that Adam is the hero of Paradise Lost.

8 E.M.W. Tillyard, Studies in Milton, London, 1951, 50.

But since Tillyard does agree with the position of the present thesis, his reasons are of minor consideration here.

Tillyard's second point is really worthy of consideration in itself. Perhaps the point of interpretation should have been changed long ago! If it had been, then perhaps the whole discussion would long since have been settled. Changing the point of the crisis opens a new field of Miltonic criticism. This we shall leave to others to take up. For the crux of Tillyard's criticism rests on the actual interpretation which he gives of Paradise Lost.

According to Tillyard, Adam needs positive action to be the hero. However, as far as we have been able to ascertain, no other critic of epic poetry or of Milton demands this quality of the hero,⁹ nor does Tillyard prove that Adam needs positive action to be the hero. But, as already mentioned, Tillyard's opinions on changing the crisis of Paradise Lost and demanding this new quality from the hero are interesting. If Tillyard had proved his assertions, this whole question may long since have been settled, and Paradise Lost may have acquired a new hue and color for the reader.

Thus far the work of the critics who have maintained that Adam is the hero of Paradise Lost. As in dealing with

9 Cf. above 10-11.

the "Satanist" school the study has not been exhaustive. But a sufficient number of critics have been cited to show the general trends of this school from its beginning to the present day.

The contention in this thesis is that Adam is the hero of Paradise Lost because he is the only character in the poem who fulfills the definition of an epic hero. That is, Adam is the only character in the poem who is: 1) the central character in the poem; 2) important; 3) noble; and 4) divinely favored. In the previous chapter it was shown that other characters possessed one or more of these qualities. None, so far possessed them all. Now we propose to study the character Adam and to demonstrate from the poem itself that he possesses all these qualifications, and therefore is the hero.

When studying, a story, and an epic is basically a story, a person automatically asks himself two questions: what is the plot, and what is the theme? Now it is presumed that the plot of Paradise Lost is sufficiently well known to permit the answer to the first question to be passed over. But the answer to the second question is of prime importance. Furthermore, we shall ask here a third question: why did Milton write Paradise Lost? Or, to use our own terminology what is the secondary purpose of Paradise Lost?

Milton gives the theme of the poem in the first few lines.

Of Man's First Disobedience, and the Fruit
Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal taste
Brought Death into the World, and all our woe,
With loss of Eden. . . .¹⁰

First of all it seems safe to say that Milton bases his theme on the first three chapters of Genesis. He is writing about man's first disobedience, when Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil which God had forbidden them to eat. Milton is also writing about the effects of this first act of disobedience: death, the loss of Eden, all human woes. This is a fine theme, but why did Milton want to write about this? What was his purpose in choosing such a topic for his poem? Milton claims that he picked his theme that:

I may assert Eternal Providence
And justify the ways of God to men.¹¹

Taken in conjunction with the theme of the poem, what Milton seems to be saying is: there are sin, death, sickness, and other evils in the world. Obviously, man is not on the best of terms with God. Man, according to the Bible, was not always in his present condition. When God first made

¹⁰ P.L., Book I, 1-4.

¹¹ P.L., Book III, 96-127.

man, he was perfect. He had no sin, no sickness, no death, and was on the best of terms with God. What caused the change from the state of perfection to man's present state: It was due either to God or to man. According to Milton, it was due to man's disobedience. Man brought all his trouble on himself, and so Milton is going to "justify the ways of God to men." That is, he is going to show that God is perfectly just and justified in treating man as He does.

When God first speaks Milton has Him exculpate Himself from all responsibility in man's fall.¹² Remember, this is even before the fall itself. God is sitting on His throne watching Satan winging his way from hell to earth. God then briefly foretells to His Son how Satan will succeed in seducing man. But He puts the blame squarely on man's shoulders saying:

. . . they themselves decreed
 Their own revolt, not I: if I foreknew,
 Foreknowledge had no influence on thir fault,
 Which had no less prov'd certain unforeknown.
 So without least impulse or shadow of Fate,
 Or aught by me immutably foreseen,
 They trespass, Authors to themselves in all
 Both what they judge and what they choose; for so
 I form'd them free, and free they must remain,
 Till they enthrall themselves: I else must change
 Thir Nature, and revoke the high Decree
 Unchangeable, Eternal, which ordain'd
 Thir freedom, they themselves ordain'd thir fall.¹³

12 P.L., Book III, 96-127.

13 P.L., Book III, 116-128.

The main idea of these lines, man will fall because he freely decides to do so, is repeated in many ways here. It almost seems as if God is straining to make this point perfectly clear.

As if this were not enough, God repeats this idea again when He sends Raphael to visit Adam.¹⁴ Raphael is instructed to converse with Adam as with a friend and to remind him of his happy state. He is to advise Adam of Satan's forthcoming attack and what the results will be if Adam submits to the temptation. Adam is now happy, but

Happiness in his power left free to will
Left to his own free will, his will though free
Yet mutable. . . .¹⁵

Even after all this repetition, God tells Raphael that He is so warning Adam

Lest willfully transgressing he pretend
Surprisal, unadmonisht, unforwarn'd.¹⁶

To sum up the argument thus far, Milton claimed that all evil came into the world because of an act of man's. First, however, he is at pains to give God the opportunity to show beyond any possibility of a doubt that He was perfectly free of any blame. He gave man but one command: do not eat

¹⁴ P.L., Book V, 229-230.

¹⁵ P.L., Book V, 235-237.

¹⁶ P.L., Book I, 1-4.

of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God did not then turn around and Himself tempt Adam to disobey. What Adam did, he did of his own free will.

This is a negative answer to the question of why Milton wrote Paradise Lost. A positive answer must also be sought: it is that man is the cause of all the trouble in the world. This will show at the same time that Paradise Lost centers around Adam.

Once again the theme of the poem is:

Of Man's First Disobedience, and the Fruit
Of that Forbidden Tree, whose martial taste
Brought Death into the World, and all our woe,
With loss of Eden. . . .¹⁷

A further analysis of these few lines proves very interesting.

First of all, the poem is about man. Satan is nowhere mentioned. Consequently, the theme states that the poem will center around man and man alone. If, as some have said, the poem centers around Satan, then Milton departed from his theme. This would mean that the poem lacked unity. But such a charge, to the best of my knowledge, has never been brought against Paradise Lost. Hence, there is at least a tacit admission that the poem is unified and, therefore that the poem centers around Adam.

17 P.L., Book I, 1-4.

There is no need to bring such a charge against this poem since the entire twelve books deal either directly or indirectly with Adam.

The first book announces the theme and purpose of Paradise Lost. Milton immediately asks why our first parents disobeyed God. What caused them to sin?¹⁸ And he answers:

Th' infernal Serpent; he it was, whose guile
Stirr'd up with Envy and Revenge, deceiv'd
The Mother of Mankind. . .¹⁹

Milton then proceeds to describe this serpent, the devil, who causes the first act of disobedience, the eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.²⁰

The second book tells why Satan wants to come to earth and seduce man. Satan proposes to the council of war in hell that they should fight back against God either directly or indirectly. The council decides, after hearing Beelzebub's speech, to fight indirectly by trying to conquer this new race called man.²¹ The rest of the book merely tells of Satan's journey from hell to earth.

In the third Book God is introduced and His plan of action towards man is enunciated. He has created man free,

18 P.L., Book I, 27-33.

19 P.L., Book I, 33-35.

20 P.L., Book I, "Argument."

21 P.L., Book II, 310-389.

but man will sin and fall away from God. Since someone is needed to redeem man, the Son volunteers. Then the scene is switched back to Satan who is just then arriving at the earth.²² Careful note must be taken that everything God says and does in Book III centers around Adam and the fact that he will disobey God.

The fourth book sets the stage for the actual temptation. Adam and Eve are described for the first time. But more important, the devil in the guise of a toad is able to prepare Eve for the temptation and fall by inducing her to dream about eating the forbidden fruit. Naturally enough, Satan leads her to dream of marvelously good effects resulting from eating this fruit.

The fifth book is where God sends Raphael to Adam to inform him of the devil's forthcoming attack. Just as in the preceding book Satan prepares man for the temptation, here God prepares man. Adam and Eve, in a sense, are placed in the middle while the two enemies each try to draw them to his side.

The rest of the fifth book and the whole of Book VI, Book VII, and Book VIII are flashbacks to fill in any information not given thus far in the story. Raphael tells Adam all about God, heaven, the fall of Satan, and the creation of the earth.

22 P.L., Book III, "Argument."

It must be remembered that all this is merely a story, or stories, within the main story. Actually Raphael was on earth only half a day.²³ These books are only sub-plots in the whole story, the piece of glass from the rose window or the piece of stone from the cathedral.

By the end of Book VIII, all the issues have been perfectly clarified. Satan has stated his position and has taken action. God has taken all the action He can take. The rest of the fight is between Adam and Satan. The very morning after Raphael warned Adam and Eve of the devil and his plot, Adam and Eve are tempted and fall. Everything in the poem thus far has lead up to this point--to the moment of "man's first disobedience." Immediately, even in Book IX, the rest of the theme is taken up, viz., "the fruit of that forbidden tree whose taste brought death into the world and all our woe."

Book X continues in the main the recital of the tale of woe. The Messiah passes judgment on the Serpent, on Eve, and finally on Adam. As if the loss of the friendship of God and the loss of their innocence were not enough, quarrels between Adam and Eve have already arisen. They know that sickness, toil, and death will be their future lot.

In Book XI the angel Michael is sent by God to banish

23 P.L., Book V, 229.

Adam and Eve from the garden of Eden. Adam is also granted in Book XI and XII a vision of the future of the human race up to the redemption. That is, Adam is shown the effects of his act of disobedience on the human race.

In brief, everything in the first eight books leads up to Adam's sin. Everything that happens after the fateful eating of the fruit is the result of this action. God's command not to eat of the fruit of this particular tree is referred to several times by both God and Adam.²⁴ It runs through the poem like a fate theme.

Furthermore; the purpose of the poem is "to justify the ways of God to men." Taken in this context this can only mean that the poem will explain why God acts towards man as He does. Note, again, that it is to man. Milton is not attempting to explain God's action towards Satan or towards the faithful angels. He is trying to show that God acts towards man as He does because of some act of man's. This point Milton is at pains to make clear.

As has been shown, when God first appears, He foretells man's future disobedience and completely exculpates Himself. Man will fall because he freely decides to disobey.²⁵

²⁴ Cf. Book III, 94-95; Book IV, 420-424; Book IX, 896-904; Book IX, 1067-1098; and Book X, 122-123.

²⁵ P.L., Book III, 80-128.

At the very moment when Adam bites into the forbidden fruit he does so

Against his better knowledge, not deceiv'd.²⁶

Finally, Adam himself admits that all the evil that he and his progeny will suffer will be the result of his sin of disobedience.²⁷

In brief, Adam is the central figure of Paradise Lost or the theme and the purpose of the poem are not fulfilled.

The second quality that an epic hero must possess is importance. We hold that Adam was important for three reasons: 1) Milton considered him important; 2) Satan considered him important; and 3) God considered him important. All this is to be understood as being taken within the framework of the poem.

That Milton considered Adam important is rather obvious. As has just been demonstrated, Adam is the central character in the poem. The main character is always important. Over and above what has already been said, however, Milton shows a definite respect for the person of Adam. For him Adam is the "first of men," "our first father," and our general

26 P.L., Book IX, 998.

27 P.L., Book X, 720-844.

ancestor."²⁸ Any father is important, and any ancestor is always respected. How much more the father of the entire human race! Milton pays his filial respect and gives Adam the deference due him. Even though Adam is the cause of all our woe, he is also the cause of our redemption. Milton seems to be a little more conscious, even in Paradise Lost, of the latter than of the former. It is not so much what Milton says of Adam, as the way he says it. Even after the fall, one is made to approach Adam with deep respect.

Secondly, Satan thought that Adam was important. He argued that by conquering the first man, he would be confounding God's plans.²⁹ Satan figured that an attack on this new creature would indirectly be an attack on God. He wanted to destroy, or at least to spoil, something that God had made. Because this was the first step in this new war on God, and because he considered it so important, Satan undertook the task alone. He refused any help from his followers.³⁰ And after the victory is won, Satan returned to hell in triumph to tell his crew of the first successful battle against God.³¹

28 P.L., Book IV, 408, 495, 659.

29 P.L., Book II, 370-376.

30 P.L., Book II, 465-466.

31 P.L., Book X, 384-409; and 460-503.

Finally, God considered Adam important. After deciding to create man,³² God prepared the world for him. As if that were not enough, God prepared for man a very special place on the earth, the garden of Eden. There God put everything that Adam could ever need or want. There was all delight. God must have considered Adam important' or else He would not have prepared such a home for him.

From the first day that Adam was in Eden his estate had the special protection of Gabriel.³³ This task was assigned to Gabriel even before Satan had decided to attempt to conquer mankind. As if this were not enough, God took special pains to see that Adam was forewarned of Satan's impending attack. Satan was still setting the stage for his attack when God sent Raphael to warn Adam about Satan.³⁴ In short, God did all He could to prevent Adam's fall.

The greatest proof that God considered Adam important is that, even before Adam fell, God had arranged for his redemption.³⁵ He had never tried to reconcile Satan in any way. But God seems to refuse to let man be lost. In God's eyes Adam was important.

32 P.L., Book VII, 155.

33 P.L., Book IV, 561-563.

34 P.L., Book V, 225-245.

35 P.L., Book III, 167-341.

Thirdly, we maintain that Adam was physically, mentally, socially, and morally noble. But before plunging into the proofs, there are a few facts that it might be well to consider. First of all, we must consider Adam for what he was. According to Milton, and Milton followed the Bible narrative closely, Adam was created by God as a perfect, mature adult. Being accustomed to reading about the first known state of man in history books, we might tend to view Adam with a certain unconscious prejudice. The first historical signs of man show us that his weapons were crude, his housing and clothing just barely sufficient to ward off the attacks of the elements, his food a handfull of wild berries or herbs and whatever he may have been fortunate enough to kill. These are the conditions of the first men known to history. Consequently, after having become mentally accustomed to thinking of our earliest ancestors as just half a step above the animals, we might unconsciously expect to find Milton portraying Adam in this fashion, as though Adam, our first father, had just "dropped from the trees." However, it must be remembered that the men of whom history speaks were the children of Adam after his fall. They suffered all the woe that was the effect of eating the forbidden fruit. From Adam to the cave men was a step down--an almost infinite step. Consequently, we must take that step up if we are to view aright Milton's portrayal of

of Adam. Adam was (with the exception of Christ of course) the most perfect man who ever lived. Because he was perfect, his needs were few. A need always shows an imperfection. Adam needed food and sleep to sustain life, nothing more. And even his food God supplied in adundance.

To come to Adam himself. Very little is said of Adam's noble physical powers and abilities. It is mentioned first when Satan first glimpsed Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. Among all the creatures dwelling on earth Satan saw:

Two of far nobler shape, erect and tall,
 Godlike erect, with native honor clad.
 In naked Majesty seem'd lords of all
 And worthy seem'd, for in thir looks Divine
 The image of thir glorious maker shone,
 Truth, wisdom, Sanctitude severe and pure,
 Severe, but in true filial freedom plac't;
 Whence true authority in men;. . .36

The impression given here is that Adam's body manifested his moral qualities. This is not strange in a person in whome there was perfect harmony between body and soul. The body reflected perfectly the true source of all its strength.

But considering physical ability alone, Adam himself gave us the best picture of himself. In describing his own creation to Raphael, Adam relates how he suddenly awoke as if from sleep on a small hill. He looked around for a moment or two and then:

By quick instinctive motion up I sprang
 As thitherward endeavouring, and upright
 Stood on my feet; about me round I saw
 Hill, Dale and shady Woods, and sunny Plains,

 Myself I then persu'd, and Limb by Limb
 Survey'd, and sometimes went, and sometimes ran
 With supple joints, as lively vigor led:³⁷

This, I believe, is an excellent piece of description. The details are few, but well chosen. From the choice of words, their arrangement, and the meter of the lines, the reader has a perfect picture of Adam. Take, for example, the first line of the quotation given above. Milton pictured a man as lithe as a cat. He sprang up by "quick instinctive motion." The springing gives the impression of "bounce," vibration. His whole body is fully alive, all his senses alert. This action is instinctive with him. Adam is just naturally full of life, enjoying all his physical powers immensely. This impression is further conveyed in the last two lines of the quotation where Adam is pictured running about inspecting the earth. The only way I know how to convey the impression given in these lines is to compare Adam to a cat at play. For agility, harmony of movement, physical grace, liveness, quick reflexes, there is no animal like the cat. To watch a cat at play is to watch the perfect use of physical strength. Yet Adam had all this and much more. He was all that a man

can physically be.

Such was Adam's physical nobility before the fall. That he maintained this nobility after the fall can only be proved negatively. There is nothing in Paradise Lost that directly or indirectly indicates or even hints that Adam immediately lost his supreme physical powers. It may well be that Adam eventually succumbed to various physical ills and finally died. But Adam's later life is not part of the poem. In the poem itself, both before and after the fall, Adam is presented as a physically perfect person.

Secondly, Adam was mentally noble. When Adam first speaks he shows a mentality of the highest order. In a few short lines Adam praises God, thanks Him for His gifts, and praises Eve.³⁸ A person's manner of speaking is always taken as an index of this character, quality, and learning. A highly intelligent person is expected to manifest his intelligence by his refined manner of speaking. (Here, of course, we are talking about conversation, spontaneous speech, not a planned or formal oration of any kind.) The dictum, "By a man's speech you will know him," is a good criterion. What does Adam's manner of speaking show? It shows a nobility of mind. Study Adam's speeches. Never once does he have to say, "It's too

38 P.L., Book IV, 411-439.

beautiful for words." Adam saw this world at its best, and yet he was able to describe it and his appreciation of it perfectly. Adam was never at a loss for words to express his ideas because he understood everything perfectly and gave full expression to his understanding.

Adam's nobility of mind was especially manifested when he prayed. Take, for example, the first prayer which Adam and Eve spoke.

Both turn'd, and under the op'n Sky ador'd
 The God that made both Sky, Air, Earth, and Heav'n
 Which they beheld, the Moon's resplendent Globe
 And Starry Pole: Thou also mad'st the Night
 Maker Omnipotent, and thou the Day,
 Which we in our appointed work employ'd
 Have finisht happy in our mutual help
 And mutual love, the Crown of all our bliss
 Ordain'd by thee, and this delicious place
 For us too large, where thy abundance wants
 Partakers, and uncropt, fall to the ground.
 But thou has promis'd from us two a Race
 to fill the Earth, who shall with us extol
 Thy goodness infinite, both when we wake
 And when we seek, as now, the gift of sleep. 39

The only one of the four ends of prayer that might be considered missing here is petition. But what need had Adam and Eve to ask? They praised and adored God not only in Himself but also in all His works. They ran rapidly through all the material universe praising and adoring God in each creature. They praise especially His bounty manifested to them

in His gifts. The trees and fruit-bearing plants are so plentiful that Adam and Eve cannot tend them all. Needless to say, when they view all that God has given them they are thankful. Finally, they thank Him for the gift of sleep which they are about to enjoy.

The last two lines of the prayer call for special attention. Adam not only sees that sleep is a gift of God's and thanks Him for it. He also sees that in sleep He can praise God as well as when awake. This shows that Adam understood perfectly that God does not need man's work. God wants man to do His will. Adam knew that he was praising God just as much by sleeping as by working or praying. Very few people understand so perfectly the will of God and their relationship to God.

After the fall there is no indication in the poem itself that Adam lost this superiority of intellect. On the contrary, in speaking with God his language is as pointed and beautiful as ever. After God passes sentence on Adam and Eve, Adam shows that he fully realizes the nature and malice of his sin.⁴⁰ Such a comprehension, or realization, of the malice of sin seems to indicate that Adam's intellectual powers were not diminished.

⁴⁰ P.L., Book X, 708-816.

In brief it seems safe to say that Adam was a person of superior intellect. Adam was mentally noble.

Secondly, Adam's nobility is manifested in his social relations. Over and above his prayers, there were his conversations with God in the cool of the evening. When Adam first came face to face with God he spontaneously adored Him.⁴¹ This might seem to be the natural thing to do, but even among men showing proper honor, reverence, and respect is considered the natural thing to do. People have to be taught how to show this natural deference for their superior fellow men. People even have to be taught how to act towards God. To say that Adam's adoration was natural is not a sufficient explanation. This can be brought out by an example. Men naturally eat and speak. Yet to perform these actions properly requires training. For instance, when two small children first meet they obviously want to talk to each other. But often they stand looking at each other and say nothing. Their desire is natural; their speaking would be natural. However, they do not know how to do properly the natural thing. In dealing with God Adam not only knew what to do, he knew how to do it. He did untutored what we must be taught.

After adoring God, Adam began to speak with Him.

⁴¹ P.L., Book VIII, 314-316.

It must be remembered that this is the first time Adam spoke.
Yet the high quality of his speech is amazing. .

O by what Name, for thou art above all these,
Above mankind, or aught than mankind higher,
Surpassest far my naming, how may I
Adore thee, Author of this Universe,
And all this good to man, for whose well being
So amply, and with hands so liberal
Thou hast provided all things: . . .⁴²

The ability to do or say the right thing at the proper time is a talent that has always been esteemed. It manifests several qualities, not the least of which is a good, practical judgment. Even God, it seems, recognizes this, for at the end of their first conversation God compliments Adam on his deportment and manner of speech.⁴³

But even admitting, for the sake of argument, that Adam's actions toward God merely showed a natural ability. How can his deportment toward Raphael be explained? When Adam sees Raphael coming he tells Eve to

.go with speed
And what thy stores contain, bring forth and pour
Abundance, fit to honour and receive
Our Heav'n stranger; well may we afford
Our givers thir own gifts, and large bestow
From large bestow'd, where Nature multiplies
Her fertile growth, and by disburd'ning grows
More fruitful, which instructs us not to spare.⁴⁴

42 P.L., Book VIII, 357-363.

43 P.L., Book VIII, 437-451.

44 P.L., Book V, 308-320.

Considering that this is Adam's first guest, except God, it is amazing to find such a refined sense of hospitality. His guest will have the very best that Adam has to offer. He will have it in abundance. Such hospitality is not a natural gift. Today it must be learned through years of practice. Yet here Adam stands preparing for his first guest and knowing perfectly what to do.

Then going out to meet his guest

. . . Adam though not aw'd
Yet with submiss approach and reverence meek
As to a superior Nature, bowing low⁴⁵

greet's Raphael and invites him into his bower home. Adam was not awed by the presence of this stranger. In Adam there was no feeling of nervousness or apprehension. He was perfectly at his ease. The difference between the way Adam greet's Raphael and the way he greeted God is noticed. God he adored. To Raphael Adam merely bows low. Adam realizes that though Raphael may be a superior being, he, Adam, is king and lord in this world.

After they have eaten, Adam most tactfully invites Raphael to tell him about God, heaven, and angels. When Raphael has finished his story and prepares to leave, Adam pays him the compliment of asking him to stay longer. In fine,

45 P.L., Book V, 358-360.

so excellent a host is Adam that Raphael is forced to comment:

Nor are thy lips ungraceful, Sire of men,
Nor tongue ineloquent; For God on thee
Abundantly his gifts hath also pour'd
Inward and outward both, his image fair:
Speaking or mute all comeliness and grace
Attends thee, and each word, each motion forms.⁴⁶

To be able to deal properly with leaders and men of influence manifests an enviable and envied nobility. For a person who is at ease socially is rare indeed. Here Milton pictures Adam perfectly at his ease not with kings and rulers, but with God and angels. He knows exactly how to greet each. Adam does not have to try to make a good impression; and because he is such a facile conversationalist, he is under no strain at all.

After the fall God comes down to earth to judge Adam and to pass sentence on him for his sin. Adam is ashamed of himself for disobeying God and at first hides himself. When he finally answers God's call he offers an excuse for his lack of promptness.

I heard thee in the Garden, and of thy voice
Affraid, being naked, hid myself.⁴⁷

Despite this excuse and despite Adam's embarrassment, his conduct is still socially perfect. Adam stands in the presence

⁴⁶ P.L., Book VIII, 218-223.

⁴⁷ P.L., Book X, 117-118.

of a person he has offended. But he stands there because he has enough social sense to overcome himself and to go to meet God. This is not all. Adam overcomes himself enough to admit his fault and to tell God he is sorry. That is why we maintain that Adam's conduct towards God here is socially perfect. He did everything, on the social level; that a person in his circumstances could have done. Again, Adam is noble.

Finally, Adam was noble morally. Here we are not speaking of the moral perfection that was his before the fall, but after it. Before his sin Adam was perfect, morally speaking. He had never sinned nor had he felt the least inclination to sin. But this perfection was a free gift from God. Adam had tested his strength, his mind, his social abilities. These qualities had withstood the test. His moral perfection before the temptation can be discounted for our purposes here. We maintain that Adam's true moral nobility is shown after his fall. We also maintain that Adam's conduct after the fall proves him to be morally superior to Satan.

Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit. Then, as we have seen, the first argument between two humans began. Other troubles also entered the world immediately. The Son of God came down and passed sentence on Adam and Eve, punishing them for their sin.⁴⁸ Now Adam's true moral nobility comes to

48 P.L., Book X, 192-208.

light.

Naturally enough, he at first laments his crime and the fallen state which it produced.⁴⁹ But after considering the whole affair for some time, Adam admits the justice of his punishment and willingly accepts it.

. . . they forthwith to the place
 Repairing where he judged them prostrate fell
 Before him reverent, and both confess'd
 Humbly thir faults, and pardon begg'd with tears
 Watering the ground, and thir sighs the Air
 Frequenting, sent from hearts contrite, in sign
 Of sorrow unfeign'd, and humiliation meek.⁵⁰

Here Adam's true moral nobility and his superiority to Satan is shown. Satan and Adam both transgressed God's law. Both were punished. Both admit the justice of their punishment, but they react in opposite ways. Satan resolved to war eternally against God. He simply refused to accept justice. Even more, he fought against it. Adam, on the other hand, accepts justice. He does not find acceptance easy, as is evidenced by his long discussion with Eve before they finally try to recconcile themselves with God.⁵¹ Like Satan, Adam could have decided on eternal war against heaven, but his sense of justice finally won out.

49 P.L., Book X, 720-844.

50 P.L., Book X, 1098-1105.

51 P.L., Book X, 720-1096.

One distinction must be brought out here. We are not contending that Adam had a stronger character than Satan. We are merely saying that Adam had a better character than Satan because Satan had vowed never to perform a morally good act. Adam had committed sin, but he turned around and performed a morally good act. Therefore, though Adam may do wrong, he also does good. This makes him morally better than Satan. We also believe that the good in Adam far outweighed the evil. He was a good man. He was a morally noble man.

As a fourth and final point in the proof of this thesis, it must be demonstrated that Adam was divinely favored. That he was the recipient of God's gifts and blessings before his fall is easy to understand. God gave to Adam his very existence, all those qualities which made him noble, his home in the garden of Eden. No man since has been thus favored. Even Satan acknowledged that Adam is favored above himself and his crew.⁵² That Adam was favored by God while in the state of innocence is understandable. However, no sooner has the Son pronounced judgment on Adam and Eve than:

. . . . pitying how they stood
 Before him naked to the air, that now
 Must suffer change, disdain'd not to begin
 Thenceforth the form of servant to assume
 As when he wash'd his servants' feet, so now

52 P.L., Book II, 350-351.

As Father of his Family he clad
 Their nakedness with Skins of Beasts. . .⁵³

When they finally repent of their fault, God sends Michael to them.⁵⁴ He is to banish them from Eden, but he is also to enlighten them regarding the future of the human race so that they will depart from the garden in peace. Though Adam must now toil and eat his bread in the sweat of his brow, there is the hope of a final reconciliation with God. In other words, Adam received God's mercy, whereas Satan had tasted only God's justice. The reasons for this are given in the poem.⁵⁵ Be that as it may, Adam is favored by God even in His judgment.

By way of summary of this discussion the following points may be advanced. First, Adam is the central character in Paradise Lost because the entire poem centers around one act of his, eating the forbidden fruit. Secondly, Adam is noble physically, mentally, socially, and morally because he possesses far greater physical, mental, social, and moral qualities than any other man. Thirdly, he is important in the poem as is shown by the attitude and treatment accorded him by Milton, Satan, and God. Fourthly, Adam is divinely

53 P.L., Book X, 211-217.

54 P.L., Book XI, 99-108.

55 P.L., Book III, 130-134.

avored by God both in the gifts God gives him and in the mercy God shows him after Adam sins. Hence, Adam fulfills perfectly the definition of an epic hero and is therefore the hero of Paradise Lost. With this we rest our case.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis was to show, from a critical analysis of the text, that Adam was the hero of Milton's Paradise Lost. To establish this fact three steps were taken.

First, the nature and purpose of epic poetry and the definition of an epic hero were studied. This gave us the principles with which to work in establishing the thesis.

Secondly, the opinions of various critics who proposed other characters than Adam as the hero were studied. By applying the principles determined in the first chapter to the text of Paradise Lost it was shown that neither the Messiah, Milton, nor Satan was the hero of Milton's first epic.

Finally, by applying these same principles to Adam, as he was portrayed by Milton, it has been demonstrated that Adam was the hero. In proving this point certain, special attention was given to demonstrating that Adam was the central character in the poem and that he was more noble than Satan because certain critics claimed these titles for Satan.

However, the whole point of this discussion was simply this. After critically studying the text of Paradise Lost in the light of basic canons of literary criticism, only one conclusion can be drawn regarding the hero: Adam is the hero of Milton's Paradise Lost.

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APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Joseph Matthew Kuntz, S.J. has been read and approved by three members of the Department of English.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Apr. 31. 1956

Date

Rev. John Conrath, S.J.

Signature of Adviser